The Culture of the Kingdom – 8 flowers pt 3

1. THE VALUE SYSTEM OF JESUS AND HIS FOLLOWERS

a. **The core values of the Kingdom**, often called the Beatitudes, actually make up Jesus' personal value system. The core values are a clear expression of His own personality and are also the attributes He desires to manifest in us. They are what He is like and what He likes. As we come to know and embrace the values of His kingdom, we actually come to know His heart and embrace Him.

b. If we truly desire to live authentic Christian lives, we must take a close look at Jesus' value system, ask God for revelation to pierce our hearts and allow Jesus' values to become our very own. Once we appreciate that these core values set the foundation for the kingdom, it is vital that we rightly comprehend what these values actually are.

2. MERCIFUL

Mt. 5:7[7]*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*

a. Receiving and giving mercy is essential to our happiness and greatness. Being merciful is not a call to be casual about sin with "unsanctified mercy." God is equally merciful, holy, and just. God gives mercy to give His people a new beginning so that they would fear God

Ps. 130:1-4 *Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord!* [2] *O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy!* [3] *If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?* [4] *But with you there is forgiveness that you may be feared*

b. There are various ways to express mercy. We are called to be tender towards those who mistreat us and complain against us, who annoy us, who are different, who are less committed to God than we are, who make mistakes, who stumble in scandalous sins, and especially those who suffer and are in great need due to poverty, sickness, oppression, persecution, or other trials. We are to help people in all these categories to feel accepted and valued by both God and His people.

Col. 3:12-13 [12]*Put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;* [13]*bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*

i **To those who mistreat us**: Jesus calls us to give mercy to those who mistreat us by lying about us or by taking what is ours (our position, money, honour, people, etc.). He calls us to give mercy to those we work closely with, even if they speak untrue things about us. He calls us to restrain our insistence on being treated fairly (justice) by showing tender mercy that refuses to take revenge on a "friend" who betrays us. This type of mercy is a work of grace in us that submits to Jesus' authority. It is more than natural kindness.

Mt. 5:44[44]*But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.*

ii **To those who are suffering:** To be merciful is to seek to help people who are suffering. God's mercy stirs our heart and moves our hand to help those in need. Jesus gives an illustration of showing mercy in the parable of the good Samaritan (Lk. 10:30-37). When we are moved to action to help those in difficult circumstances, we are seeking to reduce the miseries of others even if it requires denying our personal comfort. In a spirit of kindness, we sympathize with the difficulties of others so much that we take action.

1 Jn. 3:17 *[17]Whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love [mercy] of God abide in him? ()*

iii **To those who stumble in scandalous sin**: To be merciful to people who experience significant spiritual failure, to cover people's failures and tenderly seek to help them. It causes us to sympathize with those who deserve the trouble that they are in. It is not "unsanctified mercy," but it is the quality of mercy that agrees with God (Phil. 1:9-10).

c. We typically give mercy to the measure that we understand that we have received it from God. When we lack mercy, it is a sign that we do not clearly see the mercy that God has given us. When we think we have been treated unfairly (in being overlooked by God and His people), then we are not able to be genuinely gracious towards others. The fuel that helps us resist our natural anger and annoyance towards others is gratitude for receiving mercy that we do not deserve. We have each received far more forgiveness (after we were born again) than we perceive.

d. Justice gives what we deserve and mercy receives what we do not deserve. God always gives at least what we deserve because He is just. Yet, He is free to give more than what we deserve. Our life is so full of God's mercy in receiving so much more than we really deserve. We can easily overlook the fact that we do not deserve the house, car, possessions, or position that we have. We can compare our lack of blessing and honour with others and conclude that we did not get what we deserved. Others with more blessing received more than they deserved (Mt. 20:1-16).

Mt. 20:11-15 *[11]They complained…[12]saying, "These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day." [13]But He…said, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong...[15]Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?"*

e. The measure of our gratitude is the measure of our understanding of the mercy that we received. The measure of our anger is the measure of our lack of understanding of the mercy we received.

f. God delights in showing us mercy. He wants us to delight in this by the work of the Spirit in us. Jesus longs to heal sinful people, even those who sin against us. He wants us to be a part of His redemptive plan for our enemies. To do this, we must embrace His tenderness toward them.

Mic. 7:18 *[18]Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant…? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy.*

g. We shall receive more mercy, if we give mercy to others. Jesus is highlighting the principle that we will reap whatever we sow. Later, He develops this principle more (Mt. 7:2). We will reap mercy at the hands of others as we sow mercy. God gives more mercy to those who pass it on.

3. PURE IN HEART

Mt. 5:8 *[8]Blessed are the pure in heart,* ***for they shall see God.***

a. We approach this beatitude with a deep sense of wonder and awe. Purity of heart includes purity in our morals, motives, and methods. To be pure means to live with the goal of single-minded obedience to Jesus and to resist the defilement that comes from lust (Mt. 6:22). The heart includes all that makes up our inner life (mind, emotions, and will).

i **Morals**: To resist fleshly lusts which war against our heart

1 Pet. 2:11 *[11]I beg you…abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul…*

Mk. 7:21-23 *[21]Out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders… [23]All these evil things come from within and defile a man.*

ii **Motives**: To seek to give more to people than we seek to receive from them

iii **Methods**: Without manipulation or distortion in any of the processes

b. **They shall see God:** The pure will have an increased capacity to see and experience God. This is one of the greatest promises in God's Word. This promise is partially fulfilled in this life. To see God is the privilege of the living creatures, who live closest to God. They are full of eyes and thus are blessed with a vast capacity to see God (Rev. 4:8).

Rev. 4:8 *[8]The four living creatures…were full of eyes around and within!*

c. The ultimate experience of Christianity now and for eternity is to know, or see, God (Rev. 22:4).

Jn. 17:3 *[3]This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ…*

d. There is no substitute for purity for those who want to see and experience more of God. Purity does not cause us to earn revelation of God, but it positions us so that our spiritual capacity can be enlarged to see and experience God. We must be in agreement with God's purity to see more.

Heb. 12:14 *[14]Pursue…holiness [purity], without which no one will see the Lord…*

e. God is light, and in Him is no darkness (1 Jn. 1:5). In the spiritual realm, light and darkness cannot mix. We will "see God" only to the degree that we think like Him. The compelling power to live before man's eyes instead of God's fades before this promise. Knowing that the Spirit sees everything in our heart motivates us to live in a way that agrees with Him.

f. Believing and pursuing the promise of seeing God in a greater way will revolutionise our life. Surely we were created to see God and to be near Him. When our spiritual eye is single in our obedience to Jesus, then our whole body is full of light and understanding of God. (Dove's eyes – focussed and pure)

Mt. 6:22 *[22]If your [spiritual] eye is good [single], your whole body will be full of light.*

4. PEACEMAKERS

Mt. 5:9 *[9]Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*

a. Jesus calls us to avoid creating strife and to work to reconcile and repair relationships. It takes time to hear the hearts of others so that we may properly honour them. The peacemaker sees the value of investing time and energy to bring peace between individuals, families, races, and ministries, in social, civic, and marketplace issues, and even in the nations.

b. We are to refuse to have an argumentative or contentious spirit or to push our will at all costs. We are called to live peaceably with all men by humbling ourselves to serve them and to refuse to push our agenda or to complain against them (we are to make godly appeals in the right spirit and way). A pushy or argumentative person is one who speaks from their pride (Prov. 13:10).

Rom. 12:18 *[18]If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*

Prov. 13:10 *[10]By pride comes nothing but strife, but with the well-advised is wisdom.*

c. Peace is not sought at the expense of truth and righteousness. It is not a peace at any price.

Mt. 10:34[34]*Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.*

d. Jesus was the ultimate peacemaker. He wasn't One who "kept the peace"; He was One who made peace. There is quite a difference between being a peacekeeper and being a peacemaker. Those who keep the peace generally try to avoid conflict, while those who make peace will work through conflict unto a long-term peaceful resolution. A peacemaker will live the spiritual violence of meekness even willing to lay down his own life for the peace of many.

e. **They shall be called sons of God:** Peacemakers will resemble God to many (v. 45). The promise is to be called sons of God, so that even unbelievers may say about them, "They are like God."

5. PERSECUTED

Mt. 5:10-12[10]*Blessed are those who are <u>persecuted for righteousness' sake</u>, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* [11]*Blessed are you when they <u>revile</u> and persecute you, and <u>say all kinds of evil</u> against you falsely for My sake.* [12]*<u>Rejoice</u> and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven…*

a. This last core value comes as a result of living out of the previous seven values. When believers truly live the life of spiritual poverty, mourning, meekness, righteousness, mercy, purity in heart and peacemaking they will experience persecution.

b. Jesus blesses any who will endure persecution for His sake with a rejoicing spirit. Persecution includes being penalised or harmed socially, verbally, financially, or physically. Most persecution in the West is social, verbal, or financial, by being reviled, resisted, or ostracised.

c. Jesus warns His people to expect persecution and tells us how to respond to it (Jn. 15:18-25). Three blessings that come for enduring persecution with a rejoicing heart are as follows:

   i Persecution produces perseverance and godly character in us in this age (Rom. 5:3-5).

   ii The Spirit of glory rests on those who are being persecuted (1 Pet. 4:14).

   iii Great eternal rewards will be received in the age to come (Rom. 8:17-18; 2 Cor. 4:16-18).

d. **For righteousness' sake:** We should test ourselves when we are being resisted by others. Often, people are resisted for saying the truth with a wrong spirit or without wisdom. Others feel persecuted when resisted for doing things that draw attention to themselves or that are foolish and extreme. There is a difference between being persecuted for Jesus or for a fleshly cause.

6. CONCLUSION

Jesus invites "whoever," i.e. everyone, to be great in His kingdom by walking in the Beatitudes.

Mt. 5:19 *Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven*

a. We cannot repent of the desire for greatness because God designed our spirit with this longing. We repent for seeking it in a wrong way. Without the paradigm of being on a journey to greatness, the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle is more difficult to sustain. God invites us to greatness without regard for outward achievements or the size of our ministry. It is based on the development of our heart in love, purity, and humility, and in understanding the Word.